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# **National Medical Foundation For Eye Care**

**Fourth  
Annual Report  
of the  
President**

**October 11, 1960**

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NATIONAL MEDICAL FOUNDATION  
FOR EYE CARE

250 West 57th Street

New York 19, N.Y.

FOUR YEARS IS A BRIEF SPAN in the life of any worthy human institution. But the first four years in the life of your National Medical Foundation for Eye Care have been long years, filled with bright hopes, maddening frustrations and—and here and there—some solid accomplishments for medicine, for ophthalmology and for the public welfare.

It is my privilege, once more, to give you a brief accounting of our work during the past twelve months.

### *Public Information*

We are continuing to distribute our many publications very widely through physicians' offices and we are developing new channels for distribution of literature. In some areas, our local Councilors have arranged to send samples of our popular leaflets to the entire medical profession, and the local ophthalmologists and medical societies are financing the cost of providing these pamphlets to physicians generally, and, through them, to their patients.

We are developing our contacts with large industrial firms and life insurance companies; some have requested us to supply them our leaflets to put in the hands of their employees and policyholders.

Everyone entering your office should take home a copy of "What Is An Ophthalmologist?" and our other leaflets, too. Everyone of us can do his part: see to it that our literature is distributed at every health fair, at

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Text of Address prepared by RALPH O. RYCHENER, M.D., President of the National Medical Foundation for Eye Care, for presentation at an Open Meeting of members and friends of the Foundation, at the Palmer House, Chicago, October 11, 1960.

every county and state fair, at every public health forum, and through every public health agency in your community.

So far, we've distributed more than 2,800,000 pieces of Foundation literature—but, with your help, this figure could be doubled or tripled in 1961. The Board of Councilors have rightly declared that the distribution of ophthalmology's basic story to the public is the most vital function of this Foundation.

As you know, the Foundation has converted its Newsletter into a printed News Bulletin. This new format enables us to bring you a more complete report on the Foundation's activities and the constructive projects of other agencies in the eye care field which deserve support. The reaction to this new publication has been very encouraging.

The Trustees have approved a new program of public information to include sending our News Bulletin to the general medical publications, county and state medical society journals, science writers, health columnists and popular magazine editors.

We are also planning periodic editorial releases to the entire medical press, news spots to radio and TV stations; and periodic news stories to the wire services and leading newspapers.

### ***Press Consulting Services***

During the past year, we have seen a considerable expansion of our informational service to lay journalists and editors. We have been consulted by numerous free lance authors, science writers and magazine editors, who have sought our guidance in preparing or editing articles for the lay press on various aspects of eye care. The two subjects of greatest popular interest in our field at present seem to be contact lenses and glaucoma. We have also made available to the American Medical Association on numerous occasions consultative services for material in the

J.A.M.A., in *Today's Health* and for other publications and radio scripts.

### ***"Helmholtz Memorial Award"***

At its mid-year meeting in Miami Beach last June, the Board of Trustees established the "Helmholtz Memorial Award", through which your Foundation proposes annually to recognize the lay author of an outstanding article on eye care published in a newspaper or magazine of general circulation. Three articles have already been submitted for this Award.

The Trustees have set April 1, 1961 as the deadline date for submission of entries for the first Helmholtz Award, which will be presented in October 1961.

### ***"A Story of Service To American Medicine and The American People"***

On the well-proved theory that one picture is worth a thousand words, the Foundation has prepared a slide film presentation for showing at meetings of ophthalmologists. These slides, together with a recorded commentary, present the story of this Foundation—its origins and objectives, the scope of its services and activities, its basic policies, and the role that each of us can play in helping the foundation achieve its goals.

The main purpose of this presentation is to interest and enroll new members among our many colleagues who have not yet seen fit to give us their participation and support. Already, the presentation has been shown at ophthalmological meetings in Maine, Arkansas, Montana, Colorado, Iowa, Oregon, Minnesota, Illinois, New Jersey, Texas, Vermont and New Hampshire. If you haven't booked a showing for your local society, we urge you to do so.

This presentation comprises sixty-three—35 mm slides in color, with a recording of the

accompanying story. The entire show has a running time of about 15 minutes.

### ***American Registry of Ophthalmic Assistants***

Each of you, whether or not a member of the Foundation, has received a letter describing the establishment of the American Registry of Ophthalmic Assistants. You have been asked to complete registry cards for each person who assists you in your office including your secretary and receptionist, but excluding any physician associates or assistants. This Registry will serve several purposes:

The American Medical Association Committee on Paramedical Personnel has recommended the voluntary registration of those who assist the physician.

There is urgent need for authoritative information on the numbers and types of personnel who are assisting the eye physician in the practice of medicine, and their precise functions. The Registry will officially identify and recognize our medical assistants.

If the Foundation is to serve effectively and knowledgeably, it is important that we carry on this type of research. We can do it only with your individual participation.

If you have not already completed the registration forms which were sent you, I would ask you most earnestly to make this a first order of business. There is no registration fee either for the sponsoring physician or for any of his registering personnel. Membership in the Foundation is not required of either the sponsor or the applicant. Please help us with this important project.

### ***"New Eyes For the Needy"***

The Foundation is cooperating with "New Eyes For The Needy", an organization which raises funds for the provision of spectacles for needy persons through regular medical channels. Information on this organization

was made available at our recent Academy exhibit and may be obtained by writing the Executive Secretary at our New York office.

### ***Foundation Exhibits***

Our Foundation exhibits have been shown this year at such distant points as Honolulu, and Jasper, in Alberta Province, Canada. Other cities include Baltimore, Washington, D.C., Atlantic City, Fort Worth and Midland in Texas, Philadelphia, Raleigh, North Carolina, and Miami Beach. Among the organizations which invited us to exhibit were the American Medical Association, the American Academy of General Practice, the Teacher's Associations of New Jersey and Maryland, the Canadian Ophthalmological Society, the Hawaiian Medical Society, the Texas and North Carolina Medical Societies and the White House Conference on Children and Youth.

At the national meetings mentioned, the Foundation was represented by the Secretary and by staff, and in the case of the White House Conference, in addition by the Chairman of the Committee on School Health.

### ***Committee on School Health***

I wish publicly to commend the Foundation's Committee on School Health for its continuing contributions to the solution of the problems of eye care for school children. Over the past three years this Committee, the only ophthalmological agency functioning at the national level in this area, has rendered signal services to the public, to medicine and to ophthalmology.

This year the Committee has developed a pamphlet for parents, and an exhibit on eye screening by pediatricians and family physicians, for presentation before medical societies. The Committee is presently completing work on a manual for school nurses and administrators on eye screening in the school.

These publications will supplement the Foundation's scientific Report #7 on screening. The pamphlet for parents will soon be off the press. The members of the Committee are: Drs. Otto Lippmann, Chairman, Samuel Diskan, Earl Barrett, Morton Arnold, and Curtis Benton.

### **Contact Lenses**

The Foundation has recognized the importance of an over-all study of the use of contact lenses, including the sociological and technical factors.

We have conducted a survey of the ophthalmologists, inquiring as to their practices in patient management, and the nature and extent of injury they have seen. This information has been codified and is in the process of IBM tabulation and analysis by the Contact Lens Committee under the Chairmanship of Dr. Edwin Copp Tait.

We are aware of the need for alerting the public to what we know, and what we do not know about contact lenses. We note with satisfaction the action of the House of Delegates of the AMA, in calling attention of the public to the fact that the use of contact lenses involves medical considerations, and the attention of the profession to the fact that the application of contact lenses to the eye "is a proper function of the physician." The AMA Section on Ophthalmology has defined the issue clearly—its statement, published in our News Bulletin, is worth reading again.

It is significant that within three weeks after the adoption of this resolution one of the national news services reported that the Federal Trade Commission had issued formal complaints against ten persons charging them with making false advertising claims about contact lenses.

The Foundation has organized a course for physicians on the prescribing and fitting of contact lenses which is to be given imme-



diately after the close of this Academy meeting. This is a practical course given *by* physicians, *for* physicians. We are happy to learn that the Academy will offer several continuous long courses on this subject next year. We have also been encouraged by the interest of many lay authors and editors who have sought our aid and guidance in preparing contact lens material for the public.

We have observed and report to you some legal actions in the field of contact lenses. In the State of Michigan, nonmedical practitioners had sought to amend the law to permit them to practice the fitting of contact lenses. The State Medical Society opposed the bill; it was withdrawn. In Alabama, an Attorney General's ruling had been obtained declaring a technician guilty of practicing optometry in the course of carrying out a physician's instructions. The medical profession took exception. We have just learned that the ruling was reversed, the technician declared not to be practicing optometry when he was merely taking measurements, and the optometry law declared not subject to interpretation that contact lenses were included in the authorization to use lenses.

### ***National Legislation***

At the national level, a bill to authorize the use of optometrists' services in out-patient veterans' cases with service-connected eye conditions passed the Congress. The Foundation filed an opinion on this as contrary to the public interest, since all service-connected conditions must be presumed to be of a medical nature, rather than merely optical, if optical at all. The AMA and the Veterans Administration both expressed disapproval of this bill. It must be realized that the medical profession, to communicate its views effectively, must press them with vigor and by personal representatives appearing on behalf of the official bodies of the profession. This

is the lesson that each physician can take home to his state's representatives in organized medicine. The profession has a responsibility to the public. Individual physicians have the responsibility to stimulate their professional organizations to speak up. The public looks to the medical profession to protect it. Those who lack a medical education understandably seek to improve their status, but they also frequently lack the qualification to judge the public need in matters of health and to recognize where their own objectives conflict with the long range public interest.

### ***Ten Unique Functions***

Your National Medical Foundation for Eye Care, in its first four years of life, has performed and *is* performing certain functions for ophthalmology, for medicine and for the public which no other ophthalmological organization is performing or is committed to perform. These unique functions are the reasons for our existence and they are also the reasons why this Foundation has earned the support of physicians and of many of their patients and friends. These unique functions are:

1. The Foundation has become a recognized *source of information and reference for the American Medical Association* and its constituent and component societies on matters related to eye care.

2. The Foundation has become the recognized first point of reference and *source of information for editors* of newspapers and lay magazines, for lay magazine writers, science writers and editors whenever they require information or guidance in matters involving eye care.

3. The Foundation has become the primary *source of literature on eye care matters for ophthalmologists*, specifically for material on ophthalmological policies and for educational

material for distribution to patients and the public.

4. The Foundation has become the recognized *clearing house of information on legislative problems* relating to eye care—for local ophthalmological and medical societies, for the A.M.A. and other national medical organizations, and for individual physicians.

5. The Foundation, through its bulletins, its Board of Councilors and its year-round service as a *central clearing house of information*, has helped local ophthalmological societies throughout the country do a more effective job in bringing the eye problems and needs of the public to the attention of organized medicine, and these Foundation activities have built a better sense of solidarity in ophthalmology.

6. The Foundation is the *only organization through which ophthalmology is undertaking research in the social and administrative areas* of eye care. (E.g., the training and use of ophthalmic assistants, the functions of opticians, etc).

7. The Foundation is the *only organization through which ophthalmology is able currently to keep in touch with the activities and policies of organized technical groups* whose activities are of vital concern to ophthalmology.

8. The Foundation is the *only national ophthalmological organization dedicated to a continuous and expanding program of public information* as to specific eye problems, the functions of ophthalmologists in relation to various technical groups in the eye field, and the meaning and value of medical care for patients with eye complaints.

9. The Foundation is the *only national organization through which ophthalmology maintains contact with more than a score of voluntary lay and official agencies* representing various categories of workers in the eye

field or dedicated to specific educational or scientific purposes.

10. The Foundation is the *only nationally representative agency through which ophthalmology can formulate policies* in regard to vital social and economic problems.

### **Conclusion**

The efforts we have expended in attempting to accomplish the aims and purposes of this Foundation—and our modest accomplishments to date—have only served to highlight the magnitude of the problem we face. These efforts need—and we think that they truly merit—the support of every ophthalmologist. Only with the continuing participation and active support of all of us who care about the future of ophthalmology, can the National Medical Foundation for Eye Care achieve the mission for which it was created.



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**The National Medical Foundation for Eye Care** was established for the purpose of gathering, studying, and disseminating information to the medical profession and the public relating to scientific eye care. It serves the public interest by helping the American people to understand the basic professional and scientific standards of good eye care.